

Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling's Interview with Gary Knehans, KJPW Radio in Missouri

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GARY KNEHANS: Basic training is changing in the Army for the first time in about 30 years. The change follows several months of a review process that determined what elements to keep and what elements of training to add. Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling is the Army officer in charge of improving all aspects of initial training. He tells us what these changes will mean at Fort Leonard Wood.

LT. GEN. MARK P. HERTLING: Because Fort Leonard Wood teaches engineers and military policemen and chemical Soldiers as well as basic trainees, we've really taken a look at those specific skills and said, "What needs to change in those areas?" And I'll use the example of military police. Brig. Gen. [David] Phillips, who is currently the acting commander of Fort Leonard Wood came to us a few weeks ago and said—*hey look, because of skills required of today's military policemen which is very different of what we've asked of MPs in the past, we really need to look at what we're training and how we're training it.*

And as a result of that, we've added a couple of weeks of training onto the military police program of instruction. So military policemen will be there at Fort Leonard Wood for a longer period of training in what we call our One Unit Station of Training. On the other hand, [Brig. Gen.] Brian Watson, who's the commandant of the engineer school, he's gone to Fort Leonard Wood with some true understanding of the demands of a combat engineer in counterinsurgency operations. And they also have adjusted some of the things they're doing. In fact, [Brig. Gen.] Watson is heading up the Training and doctrine Command's effort on counter-IED changes that we're doing throughout at the training base.

GK: Lt. Gen. Hertling says the new training changes will be phased a period of the next few months.

MPH: It takes a while to train our drill sergeants in order for them to understand how we train new marksmanship, new methods of combatives, new first aid. So what we've asked them to do between now and the first of July, we've asked them to begin the training of the drill sergeants who are already there.

We're beginning to train, systematically, the new drill sergeants who go through our Drill Sergeant School at Fort Jackson, [S.C.] before they report to the training base. Plus you've got, let's use the example of Fort Leonard Wood, I mean, we've got three different brigades out there, each one have different companies that are at different places in their training cycle so you just can't flip the switch and say, "OK, everybody start now and go" because it just takes time to train, get the program in place and make it link to either the start or the end of a particular company who's graduating. We've given the date of 1 July, the no-later-than date for everyone at the training base to have this program in effect.

GK: The general says there will be more of an emphasis on combatives skills and on calisthenics to build power, strength and agility.

MPH: What we've done is over the last six months or so is taken a hard look at what we train, how we've trained it, what we've seen from eight years in combat and we've really tried to put all those things together and because we have such a constrained period of time in basic training, 10 weeks for the most part, we've attempted to relook our product and how we're producing Soldiers for today's force, and it's changed a lot of things we've trained.

We've added more hours of rifle marksmanship, we've changed the way we've done the old bayonet assault courses and turned it into an adaptive way to fight with a bayonet, a weapon, with our hands. We've done some things by adding cultural training for our Soldiers because as we've seen in combat, as they go to different cultures and have to relate to the people in either counterinsurgency or full-spectrum environment, it demands things of our Soldiers that we've never asked of them.

GK: And conditionally, will change as well.

MPH: I have a Masters in exercise physiology, so one of the things we really looked at was how we do physical training based on the demands of today's environment. And when you've got Soldiers who are coming in from a society that is less attentive to physical training and physical development, and in fact, some of the Soldiers we're getting from this society have a longer way to go than ever before in terms of developing the muscular and anaerobic skills, we have to produce a training system that was more based on scientific physiological principles and had more of a gradual, specific, and integrated approach to physical training.

Plus, carrying the weight that we've got on Soldiers today with their gear, which has always been a problem with Soldiers in combat, we've really taken a hard look at how do we improve the muscular strength of the individuals, while at the same time, making sure we didn't break the Soldiers, and what I mean by that is injure them in some way given the dietary aspect of our current society and what we're doing and what we're not doing.

GK: Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling, the Army officer in charge of improving all aspects of initial training with Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe, Va.